

Cedars, Surgener Cave, and Powell River Introduction

May 4 (Friday): 11 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. (Field portion)

7 – 8 p.m. (Dinner presentations)

Daniel Boone Soil and Water Conservation District office: 32637 Main Street Jonesville, VA 24263

RSVP HERE: <http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural-heritage/other/natural-heritage-registration>

Stop 1: Botanical Treasures of Dry Creek: Participants will see a series of beautiful natural openings amidst the otherwise dense forest. These openings are like little prairies, dominated by bluestem and other native grasses. Rare plants abound including three species that should be in bloom, Canada Bluets, (*Houstonia Canadensis*), White Blue-eyed-grass (*Sisyrinchium albidum*), and Yarrow-leaf Ragwort, (*Packera millefolium*).

Stop 2: Heart of the Cedars & Pioneering Restoration Efforts: Walking through distinctive rocky forests typical of The Cedars, participants will see Running Glade Clover (*Trifolium calcaricum*). This native clover, known only from Lee County, Virginia and a small region of Tennessee, should be blooming during our visit. The walk will include another prairie-like opening, featuring a number of species not found elsewhere in the Cedars including Rattlesnake Master (*Eryngium yuccifolium*). There will be a discussion of the ongoing efforts by DCR to restore this special habitat using prescribed fire and selective cutting and view the recovering flora.

Stop 3: Surgener Cave, Powell River Mussels, and Wild Hyacinths: This stop brings together the essence of the Cedars, and the interconnectedness of the land, natural heritage resources, the river, and water quality. Participants will view the entrance to the Surgener-Gallohan Cave System, which supports more cave-adapted species than any other cave in Virginia. For those who don't mind getting their feet wet and aren't afraid of the dark, we'll venture a few hundred feet into the cave (safety helmets and lights will be provided). Bats, salamanders, and cave adapted invertebrates are likely to be encountered. Finally, there will be an exploration of the large underground creek that flows out of the cave and a short distance into the Powell River, where we hope to find rare freshwater mussels. For the flower enthusiasts we may find Wild Hyacinth (*Camassia scilloides*), one of the region's rare plants.

Stop 4: Karst Window: Batie Springs and the Daniel Boone Natural Bridge

Participants will see the Daniel Boone Natural Bridge, a common stopping point for many early settlers traveling the Wilderness Road west to Cumberland Gap. The natural bridge marks the downstream side of the "Batie Karst Window", where erosion and collapse have exposed groundwater at the surface originating from two different springs. Participants will see where Batie Creek passes underground beneath the natural bridge. There will be a discussion of the efforts of citizens, business, non-government organizations, and government agencies to improve the polluted status of the creek, benefitting both aquatic life, and localities drawing drinking water from the Powell River.

DINNER PRESENTATIONS: 7 – 8 p.m. Cove Ridge Center, Natural Tunnel State Park: DINNER PROVIDED WITH RSVP, space is limited

The Cedars: its natural communities, rare animals, and botanical treasures: Chris Ludwig,
Natural Heritage Program Chief Biologist

Little blind beasts of Lee County: cave life along the Wilderness Road: Wil Orndorff, Natural
Heritage Program Cave & Karst Specialist